

EU elections observers depart

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The European Union (EU) has withdrawn its Election Observation Mission (EOM).

In a brief statement yesterday, the mission announced that in light of the novel coronavirus pandemic, it has been decided to repatriate the EU EOM back to Europe.

"The EU EOM calls on all stakeholders to complete the electoral process in a credible and transparent way in accordance with legal requirement," the statement concluded.

The EU EOM fielded 55 observers from 25 member states and Norway on polling day. Apart from the 20 short-term observers who were deployed to join the 14 long-term observers, there were eight diplomats from EU member states accredited to Guyana, ten core team members and three observers from Brussels.

The long-term observers had been observing electoral preparations and campaign activities across the country since February 4.

With the withdrawal, at least four of the five international observer groups that were present for the March 2, 2020 general and regional elections have exited, without the completion of the process.

The first group to withdraw was the Organization of American States (OAS) mission, which announced on March 14 that the tabulation process for Region Four was not transparent.

The OAS warned that the legitimacy of any government installed in these circumstances would be open to question.

Its withdrawal came one day after Returning Officer Clairmont Mingo made a second contested declaration of results for the region, which is the largest electoral district in the country.

According to the mission, it was pleased to have declared that the March 2 polls were, in almost all respects, well executed. The subsequent tabulation of the Statements of Polls (SOPs) in the other nine regions was carried out in compliance with the law and no dispute has arisen in relation to the declaration of results, it said.

"However, the process employed by the Returning Officer for Region 4 is not transparent and,

based on the numbers that have emanated since the process was first disrupted, is unlikely to produce a result that is credible and is able to command public confidence,” they concluded.

The Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) withdrew from Guyana on March 15. It also explained that the tabulation processes conducted by the Returning Officer for Region 4, Clairmont Mingo, were not credible, transparent and inclusive.

The COG also criticized the leadership of GECOM for failing to act to mitigate or prevent Mingo’s actions.

“At no point did the leadership of the Guyana Electoral Commission halt or rectify... blatant instances of disregard for the rule of law and electoral ethics, despite its vested authority to independently ensure credible elections,” it said.

Just three hours before the EU EOM statement, the Carter Center also announced that it had withdrawn.

There has been no statement from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) observation team but there is also no evidence that it maintains a presence in the country.

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